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THE SON OF MEROPE
AND OTHER POEMS

By Antoinette De Coursey Patterson

QUATRAINS AND SONNETS

UNDINE: A POEM ADAPTED FROM THE ROMANCE
OF FOUQUÉ

THE SON OF MEROPE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON



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To J. C.

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THE SON OF MEROPE

THE SON OF MEROPE

Among the Pleiades, the star Merope was dimmer than the rest because, so the ancients believed, she, a goddess, had married a mortal, while her sisters were wedded to gods. The star was often invisible for long periods of time.

THE BOY

“I’M tired of playing, mother, let me rest
Here in your arms, where I can watch the skies;
They seem the fairer, mother, from your breast,
The stars almost as shining as your eyes.
Often I wonder why your eyes shine so;
Sometimes I watch them burning through the night:
It cannot be because of tears, I know.
My teacher wept at school, but her eyes’ light
Grew pale and dim; I frightened her, she said,
When I begged hard to know what I had done
To make her grieve and tears of sorrow shed:
I feel it so when I hurt anyone.
I only talked to her as you to me:
Of the strange beauty of the world above,
Of all the thoughts that come when by the sea,
And of the breadth and depth and height of love.
And then she kissed me twice, bidding me run

Out in the garden, where the children danced
And laughed because the lessons were all done,
And tried to catch the butterflies which chanced
Upon the roses hiding in the glade.
We sang together, 'way down to the strand,
And I plucked roses with them. How we played!
Little CEnone even took my hand,
But let it go again, when from a stone
I dragged a glitt'ring snake to give to her.
She trembled so, as if she were alone
With Terror, though I vowed it could not stir.
And when we reached this grove, and from its
 bed
I called a wild hare forth, and bade it sit
Upon its haunches while I stroked its head,
Quickly the children fled from me and it
With oh, such startled faces! Mother dear,
Why are they all so different from me?
Why has my soul been troubled this whole year?
I pray you to unfold the mystery:
Where do I come from? Did my father die?
Had he such hair as yours, and was he tall
And straight as you are? Mother, do not sigh,
But — I am twelve years old now — tell me all!"

MEROPE

"If I should tell you all to-night, such dreams
Would come that must break up your perfect
 sleep;

It is a tale best told you in the beams
From a warm sun which will not let you weep.
Sleep, child, within my arms, and fear no ill;
My sister stars watch over you to bless;
My sister stars — my sisters are they still —
Though unforgotten is my waywardness.
Sleep, child — I'm only thinking half aloud."

(Merope sings him his old cradle song)

"Silver stars that shine so bright,
Keep from harm a little boy;
Through the perils of the night
All your magic arts employ.

"Let not hungry wolves come near,
Shine so they will think it's day;
Weave a dream of star-beams clear
Every fear to charm away."

*(Merope lays the now sleeping boy tenderly on a couch;
then, the lamps having grown dim, draws back a curtain
so the room is filled with star-shine. She returns
to his side)*

MEROPE

"Those eyes that see beyond the world are mine,
But all his father's are the forehead proud
And sensitive full lips, incarnadine
As a ripe cherry. Oh, the untold bliss
That once was mine! What was a heaven worth
Compared with my love's voice and his first kiss!

Yet the gods scorned me when I chose the earth
For my new home. But thinking of the dead
I do forget his child for a brief space."

THE BOY, *tossing uneasily in his sleep*
"Little CEnone, take the rose instead!"

MEROPE, *bending over him with a lamp*
"I see the trace of tear-drops on his face."

(After a moment's pause she continues)

"Are not the gods content they doomed his sire,
Or, like the flower, would they mar the bud?
I tremble, I who know their vengeful ire.
In this boy's veins run ichor and red blood:
Is it decreed they shall not blend, but flow
Each in a separate channel, so that peace
Must flee his steps wherever he may go,
Until a kindly death shall bring surcease?

"A little mortal shrank from him to-day,
One scarcely more than babe; as woman grown,
From his strange kisses she will turn away.
Into Love's realm he may not go alone,
But all its magic blossoms he will see,
The whiteness of their petals shot with fire;
And he will hear its far, sweet melody,
While knowing it but mocks his heart's desire.
And when in spirit he shall seek the sky,
The red blood then will surge, with sure intent
To drag his every aspiration high
Earthward again — for my full punishment!

*(On Merope's face the anxious look is followed suddenly
by one of determination)*

"But yet will I outwit their cruel ends!

I fear my sister's jealousy no more —

So dim my light is now, they are my friends.

One sent me this, plucked from the Stygian
shore."

(Merope takes a pale flower from a box)

"A single petal laid on mortal lips

Will bring such peace as only those may know

Whose spirit from the restless body slips

Into a world of dreams untouched by woe.

It means but one slight quiver of the limbs

Ere they turn into marble cold and white —

How the air vibrates with the funeral hymns

I heard once when another soul took flight!"

*(Merope lays the flower on the boy's lips. He gives a
start and then is still. Bending over him she continues,
with ever-increasing feeling)*

"I knew such loveliness must still survive.

His face in death has lost its look of pain,

And how these ringlets seem to keep alive —

I pull one straight, and back it springs again!

Upon the morrow friends will come and lay

His ashes with his father's. As for me,

I do rejoice to cheat them of their prey,

The gods who have conceived this cruelty!

Yet for the moment am I deaf and blind,

Again such human feelings surge and foam —

Celæno, Maia, O Electra kind,
Stretch forth to me your arms and take me home!”
*(The star-shine coming through the window increases until
the room is filled with a dazzling brightness. When
the light dwindles again, only the dead child is seen)*

THE TREASURE DRAWER

OFTEN in memory to a drawer I turn
Wherein my mother kept such queer, strange things,
For which with a child's fancy I would yearn:
An ivory fan, emerald and opal rings,
Attar of roses in a bottle tall
With traceries of Arabesque design,
A pair of velvet slippers, dainty, small —
I doubted Cinderella's were so fine —
Made up the treasures, and a mother-o'-pearl
And lacquer box, tight locked, of which the key
Had long been lost — since she was quite a girl,
She said. Years passed, and then the mystery
Was solved; three little feathers, golden bright,
Lay side by side, labelled in childish hand
As "Piccadilly's Feathers." How my sight
Grew dim, for I at last could understand
The loneliness a pet canary filled.
Ah, I could wish at times those memories,
Like Piccadilly's songs, might all be stilled,
Or locked in some pearl casket from these eyes!

PAN

HERE doth the Spring her fairest pledge fulfil,
Here in her groves, renewing youth in man.
The Greeks of old gave to that sweet wild thrill
A name — they called it Pan.

PEACE

'MID a noisy world whose pleasures cheat me,
Comes a thought sustains me and assures:
Peace, elusive peace, perhaps will greet me
Should my soul find yours.

So I grope my way through dreary places,
Fearing but the capture that immures,
Struggling grimly to the starry spaces
Lest my soul miss yours.

Comes a dream which doth the dark things scatter,
Comes a dream which, fragile, yet endures,
Soothes with silence all the world's loud clatter
As my soul *finds* yours.

THE LONELY MOON

HER envious kin turn from her; sore oppressed
With loneliness and fears,
She seeks the sea, and on that alien breast
Sheds her great golden tears.

COMPENSATIONS

FREE is the winter's wind;
Care-free and unconfined
 Bravely it blows:
But yet it seemeth meet
There should with it compete
All the young fragrance sweet
 Chained to a rose!

Glad is the ocean's life;
Even through storm and strife
 Unseamed with scars:
But on the pond's calm breast
Lilies do sweetly rest;
And, each a shining guest,
 Myriads of stars!

Yonder the village spires
Glow in the sunset fires
 Like burnished gold:
But yet a candle's beam
May the more lovely seem
When it a happy dream
 Of home doth hold!

FAITH

I CANNOT feel that heaven is very far,
So bravely still your love shines back to me,
As does the light from yonder distant star
Although its form no mortal eye may see.

A LOCK OF BERENICE'S HAIR

UPON the heaven's breast I lie serene,
I who once revelled in tumultuous gold —
Ere offered by the young Egyptian queen
As sacrifice. Ah but the steel was cold
That severed me from that warm loyal head,
And how I glistened with the many tears
That Berenice at our parting shed!
Half wild with sorrow and foreboding fears,
The day on which her lover and her lord
Took arms for conflict with a mighty king,
She vowed the gods that, should he be restored,
Her golden locks would be the offering.
Great Jove into a constellation fair
Transformed me; so I shine in heaven now
Between the Virgin and the Lion's lair.
But yet to curl on Berenice's brow
Once more, I'd leave this starry company;
I'd let Orion next Aquarius blaze,
Boötes dip alone into the sea
Or lose himself within the shining maze!

UNSATISFIED

THE radiant visions that my youth attended
By a strange fate have all come true, it seems;
But yet I turn me from the glory splendid
And cry, "Where are my dreams?"

A JEALOUS MISTRESS

THOU askest not of him who kneels before thee,
O Nature, if he sinner be or saint,
But that with all his soul he shall adore thee,
And keep what gifts are his to sing or paint
Thy loveliness in all its myriad phases
Of sorrow or of laughter clear and sweet:
But only will the incense of his praises
Ascend to thee while he lies at thy feet.
And shouldst thou prove a mistress too exacting
For a poor human soul that seeks its ease,
So that, his one-time faith and creed retracting,
He turns to loves less difficult to please,
Ah then he'll know the pain of having missed thee —
So colourless are now all hopes and fears —
And he shall find that those who once have kissed thee
With lesser loves walk lonely all their years.

THE RUSSIAN DANCER

OVER the lighted wood a rose-winged flame
Plays softly. Can I in mem'ry find
Aught that's so silent, lovely? Ah! a name,
Pavlowa, flits as lightly through my mind.

THE BLUE MOTH

THERE'S a blue moth in the lane.

Now it's lost against the sky,
Now it flutters back again.

I could catch it should I try!

Not for worlds, though, would I touch

Those soft wings of perfect blue,
Gentlest fingers overmuch
Must, I fear me, dull the hue.

If I were a poet, I'd

Let my fancies thus go free;
In the starry regions wide
They should float eternally.

Then the gods might find me place,

The immortal ones among,
For the wonder and the grace
Of the fancies left unsung!

MISUNDERSTOOD

DAY has a kindly, loving heart, they say,
While night is made of cold and silent hours;
But often, after night has gone away,
I've found her tears upon the grass and flowers.

THE GIFT DESIRED

I WOULD ask a gift of thee —
Train my fancy, Poesy!
Feed it with a dear desire;
Warm it at thy living fire;
Lead it to Pieria's brink,
Of those waters let it drink;

Every sinew, every nerve,
Make them so they shall not swerve.
Then, when thou hast done thy best,
To my fancy leave the rest:
Let it try the highest bars,
Straining even to the stars!
This the gift I ask of thee —
Train my fancy, Poesy!

THE MIRACLE OF THE TRAIN

I CLOSED mine eyes upon Nevada's snows;
Under the moon her plains shone cold and white.
I woke at Sacramento; palm and rose
Gleamed green and scarlet in the sun's warm light.

QUEEN NITOCRIS, "THE ROSY-CHEEKED"

2170 B.C.

FOUR thousand years ago you ruled the Nile;
To-day, if one to read your story seeks,
He finds scant record of your truth or guile,
But always you were fair, with rosy cheeks.

So when they tell me brief is beauty's power,
Its influence no sooner felt than gone,
I think of a young queen whose earthly dower
Redeems her memory from oblivion.

LOVE

A LUMINOUS spirit hovered free as air.
“You seem like love because you are so fair;
If I could catch I’d tether you,” I cried.
Somehow I did and lo — it straightway died!

APPREHENSIONS

Just before I go to sleep,
Like a flame across the sward,
Silently the fancies creep,
Golden fancies, gem-bestarr'd,
Just before I go to sleep.

Just before I go to sleep
All the brightest flowers bloom,
And the heart itself must weep,
Such the music fills the room;
Just before I go to sleep.

Just before I go to sleep
Comes a fear these shining things
Into nothingness may leap,
Ere a dream can spread its wings:
Just before I go to sleep.

THE REASON

THEY wonder that no tears mine eyes have wet,
That I am calm although I saw you die.
They do not understand, or they forget,
Our souls have never said good-bye.

RESTLESSNESS

FERRYMAN, row me across.

The flowers look brighter on that farther side,
The stones less rough that lie along its shore,
And there, they tell me, birds sing evermore.
Ferryman, row me across.

Ferryman, row me across.

Here are the same old sorrows as of yore,
Among those newer beauties I would hide;
Heed not, I pray, an adverse wind or tide.
Ferryman, row me across.

Ferryman, come row me home.

I cannot mid these scenes so strange abide;
Mine eyes grow dim, and in my heart's deep core
I long for old familiar things once more,
E'en though they be the sorrows known of yore,
Kept ever green by graves of those who died.
Ferryman, quick, row me home!

AUTUMN

THOU seemest like some warrior queen of old
Who, conquered, dons the scarlet and the gold,
All her brave beauty, with its latest breath,
Flashing defiance in the face of death.

EVENING IN OLD JAPAN

PEACEFUL and mellow looks the sky to-night

As some great Buddha made of ivory,
Upon whose brow is set a moonstone white,
The shining emblem of its purity.

A dim blue haze like incense, rising high,
Merges together mountain, tree, and stream;
But over all still broods an ivory sky
Cloudless as Buddha's face, one gem agleam.

MOONFLOWERS

THEY tender blossoms shine forth pure and bright
Like silver patines from the dusk of night,
Or are they little nuns in white array
Who slipped into the darkness there to pray?

PAN SLEEPS

O THE sweet stillness of the summer day!

The whispering wings of dragon-fly and bee
But mark its silences. A cloud's soft grey
Quiets the sun and shadows land and sea.

Thoughts into dreams, idle and lovely, turn;

Birds hush their songs awhile; and a breeze creeps
All noiselessly through the tall grass and fern.

'T is high noon in the woodlands, and Pan sleeps.

CONTRASTS

INSTEAD of birds and flowers, snow and frost.

Instead of lights and music, just the gleam
Of shivering, silent stars through branches crossed.

Instead of your live presence, just a dream.

THE WINGED VICTORY OF SAMOTHRACE

SPIRIT of motion and eternal grace,
Thou standest bravely still at thy boat's prow!
The Winged Victory of Samothrace,
The name they'll call thee ever, even though now
Thou seemest conquered by the sword of time,
Even though now thy vessel's staunchly moored
Like some great battleship whose days sublime
Are over, and a lasting peace restored.
A shattered fragment — yes! But ah thy soul,
Great as of yore, magnificently whole!

THE MILKY WAY

NIGHT, like a great black spider, spins afresh
A web of finest bars,
To catch and hold within its wide-flung mesh
All the unwary stars.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

A STREAM laughed merrily the livelong day,
It laughed, too, in its sleep;
While on the bank a willow silver grey
Did nothing else but weep.

“Do serious moments never come, O Stream?”
I asked impatiently.
It answered, “I am doing what I deem
My best to cheer that tree!”

I asked the willow if it never smiled;
It only shed fresh tears.
“To change the flippant nature of that child
I’ve wept like this for years!”

AFTER THE RAIN

AFTER the rain, beneath the sun's bright gleam,
Like tiny jugglers do the grass blades seem;
Dressed all in green they stand there straight and tall,
Each balancing a tiny crystal ball.

SONNET: I CANNOT LIKEN YOU UNTO A
FLOWER

I CANNOT liken you unto a flower
That grows to beauty just because it must,
When fed on sunshine, summer wind, and shower.
The rose and lily bow their heads to dust
When storm-clouds threaten the sweet summer skies;
But you I cannot fancy in such case,
You with the brave young brow and steadfast eyes.
Rather you seem to me like some rare vase
Of finest silver wrought with care and skill,
And gleaming with reflected sunlight clear,
A proof of the brave patience which stood still
And let the Artist work — without a tear —
And soften into the most perfect lines
The tracery of heaven's own designs.

A SUNSET FANCY

GREAT jagged cloud-peaks loom up grimly bare
Off in the western sky, where burn and glow
Fragments of yellow crystal, bright as though
A mighty topaz, falling, shattered there.

AH, HOW THE WIND TO-NIGHT IS SIGHING

Ah, how the wind to-night is sighing,
 Burdening the soul with its weary moan.
Hope is no more and love lies dying,
 Over the fire I crouch alone.

There in the ashes my heart seems lying,
 Quiet grey ashes and cold like stone.
Ah, how the wind to-night is sighing,
 Burdening the soul with its weary moan.

To a dead grief there's no replying,
 Ashes and dust by the winds are blown;
Yet what there lives in me now is crying
 For the old sorrow to claim its own.
Ah, how the wind to-night is sighing!

INTERPRETATIONS

I SEE in Jack Frost's etchings tropic splendours,
Delicate ferns, palms waving bold and free;
But to your eyes the clever artist renders
Tall masts of ships, sails set — you love the sea!

TO YVONNE

How light the cords, Yvonne, with which I hold you,
So easily at will you break away!
And when close to my heart I try to fold you,
Fearful I am lest you should tire to stay
Within a long embrace however tender.
You who are mostly spirit know not how
To make to earthly love such full surrender.
To where the snowy blossoms on the bough
Bend over and white-vein our bit of heaven,
From me already have you turned your eyes.
Perchance your gravest thought will next be given
To wond'ring to what bird those distant cries
So sweet and piercing may belong, or whether
From jessamine unseen that fragrance blows,
Or which is the more lovely, seen together,
This butterfly or the half-opened rose.
I would not take you from your world of faëry,
Even had I the power, lest I miss
A sweet strange something in you and, unwary,
Barter a finer thing for a mere kiss.
Yvonne, my love, instead I pray you lead me
Adown the illumined paths your young feet tread;
Name me the flowers and with wild honey feed me;
Tell me the song that bird sings overhead.

THE AWARD

DAWN's lovely opal lights the eastern skies,
Noon brings a topaz all one golden glow,
Then sunset doth a burnished ruby show,
But night, with a diamond star, bears off the prize.

VALE ATQUE AVE

You left me, like a bird with song clear-spoken,

All its brave plumage glinting in the sun.

You come to me again, with pinion broken,

The colours tarnished and the song all done!

I welcome you! Wide open is my casement,

And smiles shall greet you, though the tears may
start.

The dream I dreamed can suffer no effacement,

Your once sweet songs still echo in my heart.

THE DUENNA

I KNOW she thought, that old duenna Night,
My gaze had too enamoured grown — because
She swift snatched up a veil of silver gauze
And hid her sweet Moon-Princess from my sight.

SPINNING SONG

THROUGH the grey warp of my life
Gleams a sudden shining thread —
Spindle, Spindle, oh spin fast!
Weave it, Shuttle, through all strife,
Weave it so it gloweth red
Ere the day of love be past.

But the bright skein breaks away
Like an interrupted song;
All that's left there at the last
Is that sombre thread of grey
Which the loom has held so long.
Spindle, Spindle, oh spin fast!

SHINING WATERS

THE sea broke on a coast rock-bound and bare,
Its spray all golden in the sunset light,
Though first I thought some mermaids gathered there
Were combing out their tresses long and bright.

SHEILA EILEEN

SHE wore a kirtle of bright cramoisie,
A golden band her slender waist confined.
The wise ones said that half a sprite was she,
So light her foot — and lighter still her mind!

And thus it happened, on the eve of May,
In spite of many a threat and warning word,
She with the fairies nimbly danced away,
And never any news of her was heard.

But when the summer rested on the glen,
And birds sang, and the roses blossomed free,
One said he heard a silver laugh again,
And glimpsed a kirtle, gold and cramoisie!

A FAIR NAME

THY rank is high among the things of earth,
O curling flame of pure translucent gold.
The glory that was granted at thy birth,
Thou dost untarnished through a lifetime hold.

FIREFLIES

FIREFLIES, Fireflies, little glinting creatures,
Making night lovely with a rain of gold,
Born of the moonbeams, children all unearthly,
Ah how you vanish from a look too bold!

Fireflies, Fireflies, lovely as our dreams are,
Sewn with *such* fancies from the years gone by,
Wayward, elusive, as the playful zephyrs,
Hiding mid grasses, gleaming in the sky.

Fireflies, Fireflies, like unto the silent
Brown nuns who gather for the dead to pray,
As theirs your mission; holy, too, your tapers,
Souls of dead flowers lighting on their way.

THE MEDIUM

“How do you work such wonders with the brush?”

I asked. His gaze met mine so dreamily:

“*I* work such wonders?” Then a little hush,

And then, “Nay, Beauty does it all — through me.”

AN INCIDENT OF THE WAR

THEY thought him dead, the Uhlan left behind.

Feebly he crept until he reached a door
Where two were standing who, though French, looked
kind,
And asked for leave to die there — nothing more.

One brought him water. If thine enemy thirst,
What else was there to do? One bathed his face,
Scarred where the final deadly shell had burst.
A sudden light illumined the poor place;

Straight from the Uhlan's eyes it came. What dream
Has power to so efface a war's alarms?
He turned, and in his agony supreme
Clasped tight a Frenchman's baby in his arms.

IN THE FOREST

Ах, the forest visions! Poor and lowly
Are the dreams within a city's bars,
Where cathedral spires seem less holy
Than these fir trees tipped with stars.

TO THE SPRING RAIN

O WARM Spring Rain, to thee I lift my face,
Courting thy touch beneficent and light.
Would that this soul might feel thy pow'r and grace,
And dreams like snowdrops blossom pure and white.
Or errant ones, if they be sweet and fair
Like love-caught-in-the-mist, with starry gleam,
Or the wild rose that clambers everywhere
Along the highway and the wooded stream.
And golden visions, such as daffodils
Must have — or whence is all their sunny glow?
Thy elixir might overcome life's ills
And fit the soil for all good seed to grow
Within my soul. Fall, gracious Rain, and give
Me thoughts like flowers. Let them bloom and live!

HIS HERITAGE

HE stood within the docks, composed and pale;
He well deserved the sentence of the jail.
But of your pity give a generous dole —
His father murdered and his mother stole.

THE GOLDEN CROCUS

I FOUND a golden crocus
This bleak and windy day.
No other flow'r had ventured
Beneath a sky so grey.

It glowed with warmth and feeling,
The little golden thing.
What need had it for speaking,
What need had it to sing?

It *looked* so reassuring,
And in a gentle way
Asserted so its meaning
Beneath the heavens grey.

With storms of life around me
Sweet comfort did it bring,
This little cheerful crocus,
The harbinger of spring.

THY LOVE THOUGHTS

THY love thoughts are like birds all white of wing.

In trails of light, across the hills and sea,

They come with swiftest, softest fluttering,

Making the sky seem blue — so blue! — to me.

DANAÏDE — BY RODIN

SORROW for thee has dawned.

Thy lovely form,
Lithe as a willow wand,
Bends to the storm.

All thy glad wavy hair,
Like a caress,
Covers thy forehead fair
Hiding distress.

All thy soft flesh indeed
Making its moan,
Poor little Danaïde,
Canst thou be stone?

Nay, these are human tears
Falling in woe;
Though Sin was here, and fears,
Thou art as snow.

WILL-O'-THE-WISP

WILL-O'-THE-WISP, thy lantern swift I follow,
With fatuous hope thou hast my soul imbued.
What though my finish be some brackish hollow,
I shall have known the joy of dreams pursued.

ONE SUNSET

SWIFT to the mountain's highest point I sped
To watch the sunset. How the clouds rolled forth!
Like hungry billows, purple, crested red,
They swept from east to west, from south to north,
Quenching the multi-coloured fires whose flare
Lighted the whole horizon. But again
The flames leaped — fiercely now — 'til earth and air
In wild delirium seemed, from dreams of pain.

Frightened I stood there, for the moment dazed,
As though mine ears some thundering chord had heard,
Above a crash of worlds whose ruins blazed,
Accompaniment to one primeval word —
War!

The pageant faded, but the sun's last rays
Still lingered on the clouds between two hills,
When lo a city, gold and chrysophrase
And jasper, spread before me. With what thrills
I seemed to see a new Jerusalem,
Such as Gozzoli in his vision shows,
With hero-saints, as he has painted them,
On chargers with the trappings blue and rose.

And then the colours from the afterglow
Died down to softest shades, umber and rust,
Turning to grey; and all was calm as though
I heard: Ashes to ashes, dust to dust —
Peace.

A FANTASY

A SKY all rose and purple. Angel feet

Perchance are crushing grapes out to make wine
For souls who at the gates of heaven meet,
Lest they should faint with ecstasy divine.

A SYMBOLIST

HE held up a rose to me,

“It is June,” he said, “and the birds are singing.”

I smiled, for so drearily

Through the leafless tree the winds were winging.

“You don’t understand,” he cried,

“But the rose, by some faëry magic,

As blue as your eyes hath dyed

A heaven once grim and tragic.”

CARNAGE

OVER the valley swept the autumn flood,
In showers of deadly bullets fell the rain;
The firs swayed to and fro, drunken with pain,
And wounded maples stained the earth with blood.

THE COUNTRY HEDGE

SUCH a tangle, such a mess
Of the wildest loveliness.
Fragrant fern leaves form the edge
Of this winding country hedge;
Roses, pale and deepest cherry,
Mingle with the wild blackberry;
And so high above the rest,
Each with waving, plume-like crest,
Springeth bravely from the sod
Meadow-sweet and golden-rod.
Oh, I look with scornful eyes
On the hedgerows men devise —
Every branchlet pruned and planned.
Mine is straight from Nature's hand!

NIGHT AND MORNING

WITH silent step she glides upon our view,
Her form close-wrapped in star-sewn domino.
A sleepy moon bids her unmask, and lo,
A laughing goddess all in gold and blue.

AN INVOCATION

“COME, ye fair Brides, and let us garland you!”

Thus the blackberry bushes seem to say,
The while their branches, bright with bloom and dew,
Bend graciously along the sunlit way.

“Come, ye fair Brides, no queen hath such as these:
We offer — see! — our wreaths all ready-made,
And fresh from God’s own hand. Only the breeze
And dew have ever touched them. Undismayed
By any fear, in loveliness they glow.

Thorns? — Yes — but they are lost amid the flowers
Whose petals are as soft and white as snow:
Thorns? — but who thinks of them in these glad hours?
Each tender leaf glints with the emerald’s hue —
“Come, ye fair Brides, and let us garland you!”

THE FALLING STAR

A SLENDER thread of fire for the space
Of one brief moment lit the heavens wide:
And then a stillness fell about the place,
As though a little star-child just then died.

THE WAVE TO THE OCEAN

OCEAN, my Mother, why didst thou send me thence
To try my feeble strength on yonder shore?
Thou knewest, without hope or recompense,
I would return to seek thy breast once more.

Ocean, my Mother, thou wert more wise than I —
The law of thy child's being was fulfilled;
No more shall rise the soul's impatient cry —
Forever now its restlessness is stilled.

THE MOON

THOU seemest like some royal maiden dead,
So statue-like thou art, so fair and cold;
While stars their little burning tapers hold
Around the purple velvet of thy bed.

FROM A FULL HEART

I THANK Thee for the fineness of a sight
That can discern where ends the amethyst
And where begins the rose in sunset light,
And find a star entangled in the mist.
I thank Thee for an ear that can rejoice
In all sweet sounds — responsive to the notes
Of silver in a stream, or a child's voice,
Or to the songs that ripple from the throats
Of birds. And for the joy the honey-sweet
Fragrance of a hedge of columbine
Arouses in me. — But what doth complete
My gratitude, is yet a sense more fine,
Which, apprehending Thee, through mortal strife
Can feel the pulse of an immortal life.

THE RAINBOW

You bent in all your beauty down to earth,
Lured thither by the pleading of the rain;
And then, grown conscious of your heavenly birth,
Slipped softly back into the clouds again.

TRANSLATIONS FROM VOLTAIRE

SUR LES POÈTES EPIQUES

PLEIN de beautés et défauts,
Le vieil Homère a mon estime;
Il est, comme tous ses héros,
Babillard outré, mais sublime.

Virgile orne mieux la raison,
A plus d'art, autant d'harmonie;
Mais il s'épuise avec Didon,
Et rate à la fin Lavinie.

De faux brillans, trop de magie,
Mettent le Tasse un cran plus bas;
Mais que ne tolère-t-on pas
Pour Armide et pour Herminie?

Milton, plus sublime qu'eux tous,
A des beautés moins agréables;
Il semble chanter pour les fous,
Pour les anges et pour les diables.

Après Milton, après le Tasse,
Parler de moi serait trop fort;
Et j'attendrai que je sois mort
Pour apprendre quelle est ma place.

Vous en qui tant d'esprit abonde,
Tant de grâce et tant de douceur,
Si ma place est dans votre cœur,
Elle est la première du monde.

LINES ON THE EPIC POETS

OF faults and virtues equal parts
I grant old Homer in my rhyme;
Like all the heroes of his arts,
A babbler he, wild, but sublime.

Virgil his meaning wraps about
With more of art and harmony;
But he, like Didon, soon gives out,
And misses fire like Lavinie.

For too much spurious brilliancy,
Tasso they place in lower rank;
But who would not that author thank
For fair Armide and Herminie?

In Milton, of them all the king,
Some less agreeable traits we find;
For all the fools he seems to sing,
For angels, devils, and their kind.

Milton and Tasso, then a space,
But after them I must be dumb;
And I will wait till death shall come
To learn where is my own true place.

You with a soul of such rare worth,
In whom all grace and sweetness start,
If but my place be in your heart,
Its rank is first in all the earth.

LES VERS SUR LE MANCHON DE MADAME
DE FLAMARENS

JE fus manchon, je suis cendre légère;
Flamarens me brûla, je l'ai pu mériter,
Et l'on doit cesser d'exister
Quand on commence à lui déplaire.

VERSES ON THE MUFF OF MADAME
DE FLAMARENS

(Engraved on the Urn Holding its Ashes)

I WAS a muff, I am a cinder white;
Flamarens burned me, I deserved my lot,
Since to live on who has the right
When that fair dame he pleases not.

A MADAME DU BOCCAGE

EN vain Milton, dont vous suivez les traces,
Peint l'âge d'or comme un songe effacé;
Dans vos écrits, embellis par les Grâces,
On croit revoir un temps trop tôt passé.
Vivre avec vous dans les temple des Muses,
Lire vos vers, et les voir applaudis,
Malgré l'enfer, le serpent et ses ruses,
Charmante Églé, voilà le paradis.

TO MADAME DU BOCCAGE

IN vain Milton, of whom you follow the traces,
Paints the age of gold as a vanished dream;
For in your lines, embellished by the Graces
Again those days too soon departed gleam.
To dwell with you in the temple of the Muses,
To read your verse, applauded to the skies,
Despite of hell, the serpent and his ruses,
Charming Églé, lo, there is paradise.

A MADAME DU CHATELET

CETTE belle âme est une étoffe,
Qu'elle brode en mille façons;
Son esprit est très philosophe,
Et son cœur aime les pompons.

TO MADAME DU CHATELET

Of rare stuff her soul and mind,
 Broidered in a thousand ways,
Philosophical and kind,
 And her heart with trinkets plays.

QUATRAIN FROM "STANCES"

(A Madame du Chatelet)

Si vous voulez que j'aime encore,
Rendez-moi l'âge des amours;
Au crépuscule de mes jours
Rejoignez, s'il se peut, l'aurore.

QUATRAIN FROM "STANZAS"

(To Madame du Chatelet)

IF you would see my love reborn,
The age of love bring back, I pray;
Unto the twilight of my day
Join, if you can, the flush of morn.

A MADAME DU CHATELET

NE vous aimez pas trop, c'est moi qui vous en prie;

C'est le plus sûr moyen de vous aimer toujours:

Il fait mieux être amis tous les temps de sa vie

Que d'être amants pour quelques jours.

TO MADAME DU CHATELET

Love not, I pray, too much, thus do I counsel you;
To love unto the end, it is the surest way:
Far better to be friends for all of one's life than rue
The being lovers for a day.

A MADAME LA MARQUISE DU CHATELET

Tout est égal, et la nature sage
Veut au niveau ranger tous les humains :
Esprit, raison, beaux yeux, charmant visage,
Fleur de santé, doux loisir, jours sereins,
Vous avez tout, c'est là votre partage.
Moi, je parais un être infortuné,
De la nature enfant abandonné,
Et n'avoir rien semble mon apanage;
Mais vous m'aimez : les dieux m'ont tout donné.

TO MADAME LA MARQUISE DU CHATELET

ALL evens up at last, and nature wise
Ranges in level ranks humanity;
Soul, mind, a charming countenance, fine eyes,
The flower of health, and days serene and free,
Each in full share, in your life's portion lies;
For me, I seem as one unfortunate,
A child abandoned by a cruel fate,
And to have nothing that same fate's devise;
You love me, though; the gods thus compensate.

QUATRAIN FROM THE POEM
A M. SAINT-LAMBERT

(The reference is to Madame du Chatelet)

SAINT-LAMBERT, ce n'est que pour toi
Que ces belles fleurs sont écloses;
C'est ta main qui cueille les roses,
Et les épines sont pour moi.

QUATRAIN FROM THE POEM
TO M. SAINT-LAMBERT

SAINT-LAMBERT, only for thee
Do these flowers fair uncloze:
Thine the hand that plucks each rose,
And the thorns are left for me.

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